



TOWN OF ARLINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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September 21, 2020

Dear Resident,

The Town of Arlington will soon be piloting some changes to Mary Street from Wilson Avenue to Margaret Street to create what is known as a "shared street." The purpose of this project is to promote social distancing for people walking and bicycling while at the same time reducing and slowing car traffic on Mary Street. Several residents of the neighborhood, as well as Mary Street abutters, nominated Mary Street to become a shared street during the initial Brooks Avenue area shared street demonstration project in May 2020. They gathered support from local abutters and other neighborhood residents for a pilot shared street on Mary Street and received approval from the Select Board for the pilot at their August 17, 2020 meeting.

The pilot project will be in place for approximately six weeks. The expected timeline is:

- **Week of September 21:** Letter notifications mailed to abutters; Town orders materials for shared street project
- **Monday, October 5:** Department of Planning and Community Development updates Select Board on Mary Street project at their monthly meeting
- **Week of October 5:** Town installs shared street pilot project on Mary Street
- **Week of November 16:** Town removes materials of Mary Street shared street
- **Winter 2021:** Town evaluates data collected during Mary Street shared street

This mailing includes the following materials:

- Frequently Asked Questions and Answers about shared streets in Arlington
- A proposed design for where street changes would be piloted and what they would include
- Information on ways to provide feedback and assist with the project

The FAQ and associated documents are meant to answer most of your questions. However, for additional questions or feedback on this project, please contact Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner, at damstutz@town.arlington.ma.us or at 781-316-3093.

Arlington Shared Streets Pilot Program – Frequently Asked Questions

Fall 2020 – Mary Street

What are shared streets?

A shared street is “an integrated space used to better balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and low-speed motor vehicles.” The concept originated in the Dutch concept of a “woonerf” which loosely translates to “street for living.” They are prioritized for pedestrians and other active transportation modes such as bicycling, and vehicles are slowed by placing trees, planters, parking areas, and other obstacles in the street. Motorists in these areas are encouraged to travel at slow speeds, around 10-15 miles per hour.¹

Why is the Town supporting and proposing shared streets?

Providing additional street space for people to social distance as well as travel and recreate via active modes is a critical part of the Town of Arlington’s COVID-19 response. People need to get outside and be active to stay healthy during COVID-19 but must also social distance from one another. While it remains safest to stay distanced from others during this time, we know people need to travel from their homes to make essential trips to grocery stores, food pantries, or medical appointments. Additionally, getting fresh air and exercise can be hard to do at home. Shared streets provide more options for residents to be outside and stay socially distanced while also promoting safe streets for all users.

What are the elements of the design of a shared street?

Shared streets are being implemented with temporary, movable materials that can be adjusted as needed or removed if a safety issue arises. Materials include traffic cones and delineators, sawhorses, sandwich boards, and signage. Intersection points where the shared street meets a non-shared street will have gateway treatments. Major intersection points will incorporate both shared street and diversionary signage (i.e. “Road Closed to Thru Traffic”) as well as traffic calming, while minor intersection points will have shared street signage with traffic calming as needed in the street context. Temporary traffic calming elements being piloted include chicanes², chokers/neck-downs³, and mini traffic circles.⁴

¹ See “PEDSAFE [Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System] – Shared Streets.” http://www.pedbikesafe.org/pedsafe/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=67

² http://www.pedbikesafe.org/pedsafe/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=33

³ http://www.pedbikesafe.org/pedsafe/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=32

⁴ http://www.pedbikesafe.org/pedsafe/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=34

How long will the shared street be in place?

The Town is testing these interventions in a pilot manner, with the timeline approved by the Select Board. However, it is expected that any open shared street pilots will be closed out no later than the week of November 16, weather permitting. An earlier snow storm will require the Town to remove the temporary materials from the street so they are not damaged by snow plows or cause damage to them. If the shared streets projects prove successful based on data collected, the Town may consider transitioning to more permanent installations for the long-term.

Who can use shared streets?

Shared streets will remain open to local vehicle traffic, deliveries, and emergency vehicles, while discouraging drive through vehicle traffic. With slower speeds and fewer cars, these residential streets will be prioritized for bicyclists and pedestrians to navigate and maintain physical distance (at least 6 feet!) while making daily car-free trips to schools, grocery stores, and other essential locations, as well as recreational activities.

How do shared streets work for drivers?

Shared streets will be closed to through traffic - people driving should not use shared streets unless necessary to reach a final destination. Shared Streets are open only to local traffic (abutters, their visitors, and deliveries) as well as for emergency services, street cleaning and trash/recycling collection. Shared streets will be marked with signage and barricades at key entrances and with temporary traffic calming treatments along the street. All drivers using shared streets should drive slowly and safely, and should expect to see people walking and biking along the street.

How do shared streets work for people walking and biking or using other active transportation modes?

People can safely distance themselves from neighbors when walking, jogging, biking and rolling along these streets and should always maintain at least 6 feet of space from others and remain aware of their surroundings at all times. People biking should expect to ride slowly and carefully, sharing space with pedestrians. People should use their best judgement when using shared streets to avoid crowding, and should use other quiet neighborhood streets if a shared street appears too busy.

Are Shared Streets safe?

Shared Streets will utilize Town signage, cones, and barricades at key entrances and with temporary traffic calming treatments along the street to reduce vehicle speeds. Regardless of travel mode, all users of shared streets must remain aware of their surroundings at all times and should travel slowly and carefully. Facial coverings are

required and group activities are not recommended. People walking should not wear headphones unless they plan to remain on the sidewalk.

What kind of data will be collected about shared streets?

The Town plans to collect before and after data of car traffic volumes and speeds on the street; before and after data of usage by people walking and biking, as well as general observations of safety, social distancing, and mask usage; and comments from abutters and local residents on perceptions of safety, traffic speed, volume, and other concerns. The Town will do its best to be responsive to residents' needs and experiences. As we see how the streets are working, get feedback from residents, and adjust to the changing business operations and commuting patterns during this time, we anticipate making changes to shared streets.

How is this being paid for?

The initial demonstration project in the Brooks Avenue area in May 2020 was supported by a grant for technical assistance and some materials from the Lawrence and Lillian Solomon Foundation. The continuation of the Brooks Ave area in August through September 2020 was accomplished using some materials from the demonstration project and materials already on hand from the Department of Public Works. The Mary Street pilot project is funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Shared Streets and Spaces program in the amount of \$10,947.

What are other communities doing about shared streets?

The strategies draw directly from Tactical Urbanism and are being used by cities and towns within the Boston region as well as the rest of the United States and the world. Adjacent communities that are developing networks of shared streets and shared spaces along the same principles as Arlington include Medford⁵, Somerville⁶, Cambridge⁷, and Lexington⁸.

How can I provide input or report a problem?

Inquiries about the shared streets program can be directed via email to Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner, at damstutz@town.arlington.ma.us.

⁵ <https://www.medfordma.org/2020/08/27/shared-streets-pilot-program-3-streets-selected-2nd-round-of-nominations-now-open/>

⁶ <https://somervoice.somervillema.gov/covid19mobility>

⁷ <https://www.cambridgema.gov/covid19/streets>

⁸ <https://www.lexingtonma.gov/home/news/jersey-barriers-installed-additional-sidewalk-space-lexington-center>

Arlington Shared Streets Program

Mary Street Shared Streets Design Proposal

The proposed design for the Mary Street Shared Street has been developed by the Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development based on its experience with the Brooks Avenue shared street project, research on other shared streets projects locally and nationally, and guidance from national and regional sources. The next several pages provide descriptions of the proposed elements of the shared street to identify the shared street and slow car traffic. It also includes a map of the general locations of the shared street elements; exact locations will be sited during field review and based on public comments (See “Providing Feedback and How to Help” at the end of this package).

The information below describes in more detail the various shared streets elements the Town will use. Part of the text has been sourced and adapted from the Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System (PEDSAFE), a project of the Federal Highway Administration Office of Safety prepared by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and Toole Design Group. More detailed information can be found at <http://www.pedbikesafe.org/pedsafe/countermeasures.cfm> under the “Traffic Calming” countermeasures section.

Shared Streets Elements:

Gateways

A gateway is a physical or geometric landmark that indicates a change in environment from a higher speed arterial or collector road to a lower speed residential or commercial district. Gateways may be a combination of street narrowing, medians, signing, archways, roundabouts, or other identifiable feature. Gateways should send a clear message to motorists that they have reached a specific place and must reduce speeds. The Town of Arlington uses “major” gateways and “minor” gateways”. Major gateways include diversionary signage (“Road Closed to Thru Traffic”) and shared street signage; they will narrow the entrance to the street and are meant to be used at major intersections where more cut-through traffic is expected and can be easily diverted. Minor gateways include shared street signage and may narrow the entrance slightly; they are meant to be used on lower-traffic side street intersections where diversion may be difficult but less traffic is expected.

Chokers/Neck-Downs

Chokers are designed to slow vehicles at a mid-point along the street through narrowing the street width at a specific location. Chokers are curb extensions that narrow a street by widening the sidewalks or planting strips, effectively creating a pinch point along the street. Chokers can be created by bringing both curbs in, or they can be done by more dramatically widening one side at a midblock location. They can also be used at intersections, creating a gateway effect when entering a street. The Town of Arlington will test chokers at points along the street to narrow the car travel lanes to encourage slower traffic.

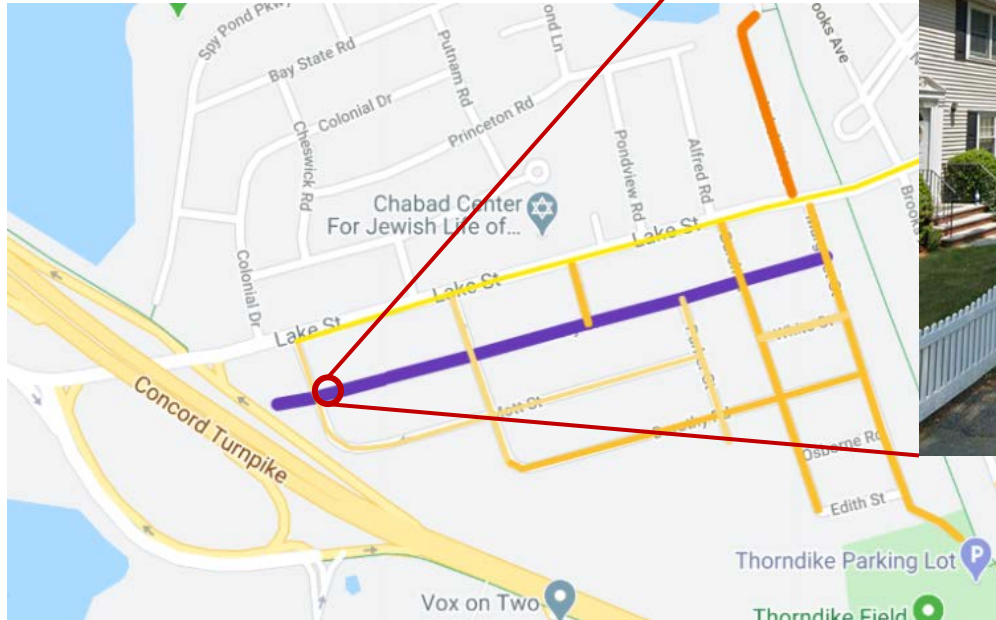
Chicanes

Chicanes are horizontal traffic control measures used to reduce vehicle speeds on local streets. They create a horizontal diversion of traffic by shifting the travel lane, requiring drivers to weave around them and reduce their speed. The Town will use these at points along the street to encourage slower traffic.

Mini Traffic Circles

Mini-circles are raised circular islands constructed in the center of residential street intersections. They reduce vehicle speeds by forcing motorists to maneuver around them. Drivers making left turns are directed to go on the far side of the circle prior to making the turn. The Town will test these at four-way intersections where intersection geometry allows.

Mary St.



Gateways:

- Major at Margaret St and Wilson Ave
- Minor at Littlejohn, Homestead, Burch, and Parker

Traffic calming:

- Mini traffic circles at Littlejohn and Burch
- Neck downs or chicanes on each block

Mary Street Shared Street: Major and Minor Gateways

Major Gateway Materials:

- Sawhorse with “Road Closed to Thru Traffic” sign (MUTCD R11-4)
- Sandwich board with “Shared Street – Local Access Only” message
- Traffic delineators if needed



Minor Gateway Materials:

- Sandwich board with “Shared Street – Local Access Only” message
- Traffic delineators if needed



Mary Street Shared Street: In-Road Traffic Calming

Mini-traffic circle or roundabout:

- Location - At four-way intersections with traffic crossing the shared street
- Materials – traffic delineators and signs



Curb extensions and neck-downs:

- Location - Middle of a block or at intersections
- Materials - Traffic delineators



Chicanes:

- Location – Middle of a block
- Materials - Traffic delineators



Note: Pictures at right are examples only and Mary Street interventions may look different

Gateways and Temporary Traffic Calming for Mary Street – Overview



Arlington Shared Streets Program

Providing Feedback & How to Help

How to provide input or other feedback

Town staff are seeking input on the proposed design of the shared street, specifically the locations of the gateways and locations of the temporary traffic calming. Please provide feedback about the design no later than **Friday, October 2**.

To provide input on this project or other feedback please email Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner, at damstutz@town.arlington.ma.us.

How to help with the shared streets program

Resident support is important to make this program successful. Here's how you can help:

- Relay information about the shared streets project to your neighbors, community contacts, and other distribution lists via word of mouth, email, Whatsapp, etc. – to make sure everyone knows about the project and its purpose.
- Help us maintain the streets. Staff will visit the area periodically to check the placement of materials and signs, and you can help too by putting traffic cones back where they belong if they get moved.
- Report any issues or observations about the shared street (see above).
- Volunteer to distribute flyers or other information for the project.